

(Washington, D.C.) – On Tuesday evening, U.S. Rep. Rush Holt (NJ-12) will attend President Obama's State of the Union address with Sarah Cadogan, a Plainfield mother whose 17-year-old son Spencer was murdered with a firearm on November 11, 2010.

The President is expected to use the nationally televised address to urge Congress to act to rein in gun violence.

"Now is the time," Holt said on a conference call with Sarah Cadogan and members of the news media. "After every one of these shootings over the decades, people say, 'Okay, now is the time to act.' Rarely do we see action."

In the aftermath of her son's death, Sarah Cadogan founded Young Men of Resilience, an organization that helps young males in the Plainfield area achieve their full potential. The organization provides mentorship, hosts forums, and provides seminars on topics including character education, career planning, college preparation, and conflict resolution.

On her organization's website, Cadogan has written, "[Spencer] will never attend his high school prom, graduate from high school, serve his country in the military, get married, give me a grandchild, receive a degree in engineering, attend his nephew's football games, his niece's cheerleading competitions, and celebrate his sisters' college graduations, weddings, and career achievements. From this tragedy, Young Men of Resilience was born. In an ever-changing, global, competitive world, we as community stakeholders must invest in the future of our young men."

Holt has introduced legislation to rein in gun violence by bringing New Jersey's firearm registration laws to the rest of the country, and he has participated actively in the work of the Congressional Gun Violence Prevention Task Force. Holt also has supported the President's wide-ranging proposals for reforms to reduce gun violence, including closing background check loopholes to keep guns out of dangerous hands, banning military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, making schools safer, and increasing access to mental health services.

“Our task here,” Holt said on the conference call, “is not just to prevent madmen from going into Sikh temples or movie theaters, or shootings in high schools or elementary schools or colleges of dozens of people. It’s also to prevent the gun wars on the corner and the accidental shootings on the front porch. All of those things.”

“Although [Spencer] is absent physically,” Sarah Cadogan added, “his spirit is here, and it is our hope and our prayer that we get this legislation passed so that not many more families have to experience the loss that my family has.”